

CHAPTER XI

THE GRADES OF THE ORDER



HE CONFESSIO SAYS: "This Fraternity . . . is divided into degrees," but neither of the original Rosicrucian manifestoes gives any details as to the system of Grades. Tradition, however, has it that the Grades are ten in number. Every Grade corresponds to one of the Sephiroth, or numeral emanations, represented by the circles on the Qabalistic Tree of Life.

The Grades ascend the Tree from the tenth circle to the first. Hence, progress in the Invisible Order is approach to Unity, and this is also approach to true self-knowledge, inasmuch as the highest Grade corresponds to the first circle, *Kether* (the Crown), the seat of *Yekhidah* (the Indivisible), or the macrocosmic I AM, which is the same as the Hindu *Atman* and is probably closely related to the *Khu*, or spiritual soul, of the ancient Egyptians. *Yekhidah*, in other words, is the essential Man whose true nobleness and worth it is the purpose of Rosicrucianism to reveal.

The ten Grades are divided into three classes or Orders. The First Order comprises the Grades corresponding to the circles from 10 to 7 inclusive. The Second Order has three Grades, corresponding to circles 6, 5, and 4. The Third Order includes the Grades corresponding to circles 3, 2, and 1.

Every Grade has a number, represented by an equation, in which the first figure represents the number of steps taken by the aspirant in his journey toward Unity, and the second number of the equation indicates the Sephirah to which the Grade corresponds. Thus, the Grade of Zelator is represented by the equation $1 = 10$, because it is the *first* Grade of the Order, and corresponds to the *tenth* circle on the Tree of Life. Tradition gives these Grades the Latin names shown in Table 4 on page 156.

Besides these ten Grades attributed to the Tree of Life, some societies working according to the Rosicrucian tradition include a preparatory Grade, that of Neophyte, $0 = 0$. In this Grade are given certain

Table 4. Rosicrucian Grades

Number	Latin Names	Equation	Correspondence
FIRST ORDER			
1	Zelator	$1 = 10$	Kingdom
2	Theoricus	$2 = 9$	Foundation
3	Practicus	$3 = 8$	Splendor
4	Philosophus	$4 = 7$	Victory
SECOND ORDER			
5	Adeptus Minor	$5 = 6$	Beauty
6	Adeptus Major	$6 = 5$	Strength
7	Adeptus Exemptus	$7 = 4$	Mercy
THIRD ORDER			
8	Magister Templi	$8 = 3$	Understanding
9	Magus	$9 = 2$	Wisdom
10	Ipsissimus	$10 = 1$	The Crown

preliminary obligations, together with practical work that prepares the Neophyte to enter the progressive training represented by the ten Grades corresponding to the ten circles on the Tree.

This entire scheme will be understood better by reference to the frontispiece. There it will be seen that from each circle certain paths of the Tree of Life lead upward to the circles above. In the ceremonial work of societies following this pattern and in the actual work of physical and spiritual transformation corresponding to these ceremonies the paths of the Tree are traversed in reverse order.

Thus, it happens that entry into a given Grade does not always give one access to all the paths proceeding upward from that Grade. This will be understood better by reference to Figure 7. There it will be seen that the paths numbered 32, 31, and 29 all lead upward from the tenth circle. But when one has become a Zelator, the only one of these three that is open is the 32d path, because that is the path leading to the next Grade, the Grade of Theoricus.

When the Grade of Theoricus has been reached, the 31st path, from Kingdom to Splendor, is open, and also the 30th path, from Foundation to Splendor. Not until these two have been traversed, however, is the 29th path, that leading from Kingdom to Victory, open to the advancing aspirant, but when he has traversed this, he may pass through the 28th path, from Foundation to Victory, and through the 27th, from Splendor to Victory.

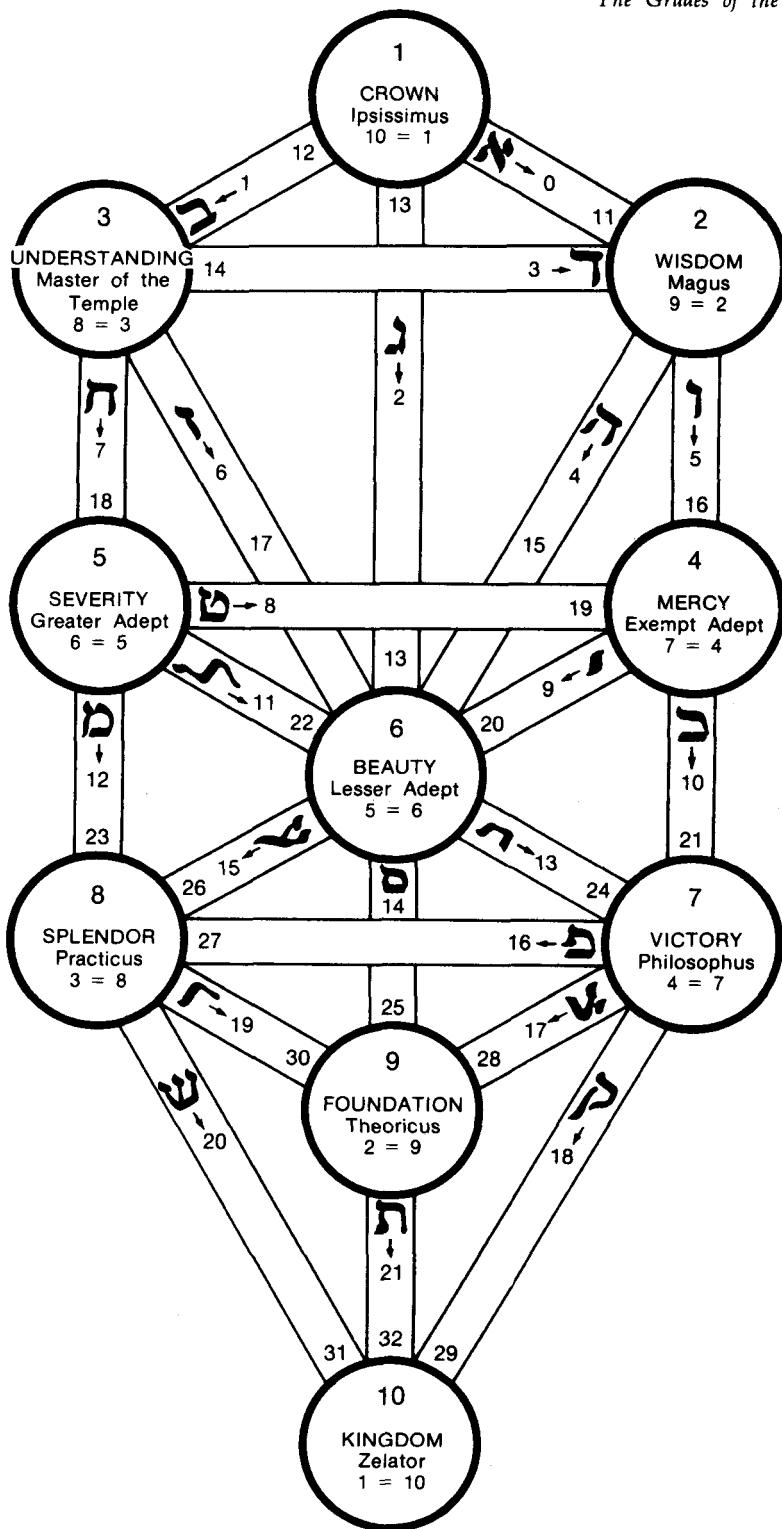


Figure 7. Tree of Life Diagram showing the Grades of Initiation

The PATTERN on the
TRESTLEBOARD

This Is Truth About The Self

0 All the Power that ever was or will be is here now.

1 I am a center of expression for the Primal Will to Good, which eternally creates and sustains the Universe.

2 Through me its unsailing Wisdom takes form in thought and word. ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰

3 Filled with understanding of its perfect law, I am guided, moment by moment, along the path of liberation.

4 From the exhaustless riches of its Limitless Substance, I draw all things needful, both spiritual and material.

5 I recognize the manifestation of the Undeviating Justice in all the circumstances of my life. ☰ ☰ ☰

6 In all things great and small, I see the Beauty of the Divine Expression. ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰ ☰

7 Living from that Will, supported by its unsailing wisdom and Understanding, mine is the Victorious Life.

8 I look forward with confidence to the perfect realization of the Eternal Splendor of the Limitless Light.

9 In thought and word and deed, I rest my life, from day to day, upon the sure Foundation of eternal being.

10 The Kingdom of Spirit is embodied in my flesh. ☰

Figure 8. The Pattern on the Trestleboard illustrates the Ten Divine Emanations of the Qabalistic Tree of Life or ten aspects of God. It is also an evolutionary picture of man's destiny in unfolding his conscious awareness of the creator. Paul Case received these statements from the teacher who guides the work of Builders of the Adytum. The term *trestleboard* is used in Freemasonry to illustrate the plans of the Great Architect of the Universe, who is God. The term *pattern* indicates that ordered plan.

What this means is that although one enters the tenth Sephirah at the beginning of his Rosicrucian experience, he must have had the knowledge conferred in the Grade of Theoricus before he may enter either of the two paths leading upward to the Grade of Practicus. It is as if the doors to these paths were locked, and as if the keys were kept in rooms represented by circles 9 and 8. The keys to paths 31 and 30 are kept in circle 9; those to paths 29 and 28 are kept in circles 8 and 7, respectively; and the keys to paths 27 and 26 are also kept in circle 7, but the latter may not be used until the aspirant is ready to advance into the Second Order.

According to Qabalistic doctrine, the root of the Tree of Life is in *Kether*, and its fruit is in *Malkuth*, the Kingdom; that is, the Tree hangs upside down, like the Yggdrasil of Norse mythology and the sacred tree mentioned in the Bhagavad-Gita. The tenth Sephirah, the Kingdom, is the lowest or outermost manifestation of the Life Power and corresponds to the physical plane.

Consequently, the Rosicrucian scheme of initiation begins with this Sephirah and works upward toward *Kether*, the Crown, in the reverse order of the paths on the Tree of Life. This is in accordance with the notion that we must begin where we are, and that the path of initiation is a Way of Return. Hence, the Rosicrucian manifestoes speak of the amendment of philosophy as being a restoration rather than an innovation.

Every one of the circles on the Tree of Life has many occult meanings; so has every one of the connecting paths. The meanings of the circles are all developed from the abstract ideas of number. The meanings of the connecting paths are related to the occult significance of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In the diagram the Hebrew letter in each path is the one pertaining to that path, and near each letter is a small arrow pointing to a number. This number is that of the Tarot Key corresponding to the letter. The other number in each path is its number in the scheme of the Thirty-two Paths of Wisdom. Of these thirty-two paths, the first ten are the circles on the Tree of Life. The eleventh to the thirty-second are the channels connecting the circles. Thus, the eleventh path is that of Aleph and of Key 0 in Tarot, and the thirty-second path is that of the letter Tav and Key 21.

In this book it is impossible to enter into a detailed analysis of the Tarot Keys. I have dealt with these at greater length in my book *The Tarot: A Key to the Wisdom of the Ages* and in courses on Tarot. Figure 8, The Pattern on the Trestleboard, should be studied as it will be referred to in connection with the Tarot Keys. The reproduction of the major trumps of Tarot used in this book are from the designs used by the Builders of the Adytum, one of the several societies working ceremonially according to the scheme of Grades explained hereafter.¹

¹Courses on Tarot form part of the curriculum of instruction issued by Builders of the Adytum (B.O.T.A.), 5101 North Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, California 90042. The Tarot Keys used in this book may be obtained through Builders of the Adytum at the above address.

The main thing to bear in mind in approaching this explanation of the Rosicrucian Grades is that every path on the Tree of Life corresponds to some particular mode of human consciousness. In the old Qabalistic books, the descriptions of these paths are very brief and are couched in language intentionally cryptic. Yet these descriptions are of vital importance, because they refer to mental states that are present in the life of every human being. Sometimes they are latent, sometimes active, but they are always part of the makeup of every man and woman.

The old Rosicrucian and Qabalistic training, therefore, is of immediate interest to you, because it not only deals with all the elements of your consciousness but also aims to bring each element into the best possible manifestation and into harmonious combination with all the others. No single book can exhaust this tremendous subject, but it is hoped that the following chapters will shed light on the Path of Return that leads to that priceless attainment, true self-knowledge.